THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

December/January 2012-13 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Resurrecting Jesus

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

As people were leaving Mass one Sunday, a man pointed to a copy of our newsletter and asked me, "Where do you get all that peace crap?"

"From Jesus," I replied timidly.

"*Jesus?*" he scoffed, "He died a *long* time ago."

Despite *Time* magazine's famous cover asking, "Is God dead?," Jesus remained a vibrant character throughout my youth. His biography made it to the big screen in *King of Kings* and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. He enjoyed extended runs on Broadway and then again on the big screen in *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. English classes still featured novels by Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Sinclair chuck full of Christ figures. In college, I read non-Christians as diverse as Kurt Vonnegut and Mahatma Gandhi who were inspired by Jesus. The only picture Gandhi allowed in his spartan dwelling was of Jesus. Vonnegut punctuated his novel *Jailbird* with a reference from Saint Matthew's Gospel. Theologians of liberation mined the life of Jesus for a road map on how to lift up the poor and oppressed in Latin America and elsewhere. Jesus was very much alive.

South Park's Jesus

Outside niche markets like Christian rock, Jesus seems to be getting much less face time nowadays. What He does get is rarely serious. Sacha Baron Cohen's satirical character Borat asks Texas fundamentalists if "Mr. Jesus" can help him get to California to meet Pamela Anderson. Steve Coogan, in *Hamlet 2* shakes up a high school musical with a number titled, "Rock Me Sexy Jesus." *Saturday Night Live* featured Jesus in a robe, sports socks, and running shoes visiting the Denver Bronco's locker room to tell quarterback Tim Tebow that his evangelicalism was cloying. The only repeat bookings Jesus gets are on *South Park* where He battled Satan in a boxing ring and, more recently, appeared wearing a T-shirt that proclaimed, "Free Pussy Riot" (the jailed Russian human rights punk band). Face it, the scriptural Jesus just doesn't seem to be getting exposure nowadays.

Much of the blame for Jesus' trivialization probably rests with Christians. Millions of Jesus' modern disciples belong to the NRA and the Tea Party, and even outright sexist, racist, and anti-environmental organizations. Many more portray Jesus in a mushy sentimental or a harshly judgmental mode. Either extreme is off-putting, to say the least. Aside from a recent campaign against global warming during which evangelicals asked, "What kind of car would Jesus drive?", few denominations make concerted public efforts to present Jesus as relevant to current events.

Consequently, more and more young people understand Jesus as a plastic figurine or a guru for reactionaries and old folks. They'd be hard-pressed to describe His philosophy or life's work. Christ just doesn't figure in their economic, political, or personal choices. In social settings, Jesus is a major non-starter. When was

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Brothers on the Street

by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy

A quiet fervor emanates from Brother James Curran's *A Circuitous Spiritual Journey*. The slim memoir chronicles his migration from rising professional in the world of Boston opera to founder of the Little Brothers of Saint Francis, a small contemplative community that lives radical poverty and offers a ministry of friendship to the city's homeless. Its charism of prayer, poverty, and personalism – the "three P's" – is derived from Saint Francis' *Rules for Religious Life in Hermitage*s and Curran's *Way of Life*, a description of the community's mission and work.

"Brothers on the Street," the late Boston Cardinal Humberto Medeiros once dubbed these friars of the denim-blue habit. Home is a humble, wood-frame house in the poor neighborhood of Mission Hill, their daily routine—Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and time spent hanging out with the inhabitants of the doorways and alleys of the city.

The only son of a telephone operator and construction worker, Curran, a Boston native, lived "a devout and unspectacular childhood" until his father's plane was shot down during a bombing raid over Munich, Germany in World War II. His father's sudden death left the young boy with a desire to "do something beautiful for God," a desire that persisted throughout the meanderings of adolescence and young adulthood. Curran's journey included a stint as a Salesian seminarian, a nurse, a waiter, as well as hectic, exhilarating years working in opera. An Irish tenor, he sang some principle roles and even shared the stage, as chorister, with luminaries Beverly Sills and Placido Domingo.

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CATHOLIC RADICAL

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Jesus

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the last time anybody under 30 described Jesus as their hero?

This is tragic because the actual Jesus described in the New Testament is witty, intelligent, brave, creative, funny, theatrical, humble, commanding, compassionate, physically fit, fully human, and divine. He's a great story teller, who makes sure there's plenty of wine at a wedding and food at a picnic. He won't tolerate racism or sexism. He freely associates with outcasts, but does not confine his outreach to the fringe. He is an orthodox Jew with the wisdom not to be trapped by legalism. He sees human misery and acts to ameliorate it. He challenges one of history's largest empires without ever using or endorsing violence. He walks on water and bleeds when He falls. He knows what it is like to be hungry and thirsty. He identifies with workers and the poor. He chastises the rich and powerful. He inspires change without taking up governmental office or joining a political movement or party. He sees beyond ideology to find goodness in a soldier and rich man. He elevates love to the highest of all virtues. He suffers a martyr's death, as millions still do, but, unlike most, holds to nonviolence to the end. Ultimately, He is resurrected as an example to all of us that God will not allow evil to prevail. His message and personal example remain one of, if not the most powerful, in human history. I believe it grieves Him to watch human beings flail around with violent and greedy value systems that are capable only of increasing human misery.

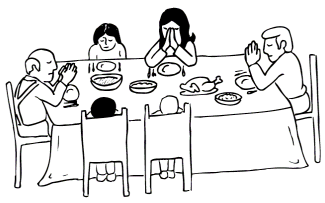
Ultimately, the question of whether or not the integrity, philosophical wholeness, and wisdom of Christ slips into obscurity or irrelevance is not up to the media. It is up to those of us who claim to be His followers. Our lives need to be so closely modeled on His that people can find the opening to Him in us. We should be great introductions to the Gospels. And when we are inevitably asked why we live counter-culturally, why we eschew war, and welcome the poor into our homes, we should be able to respond like Vonnegut's protagonist, "Why, the Sermon on the Mount, of course." Ω

Sarah Young

Lord, where shall
I find thee?
High and hidden
is thy place;
And where shall
I not find thee?
The world is full
of thy glory.

I have sought
thy nearness,
with all my heart
I called thee,
And going out
to meet thee
I found thee
coming toward me. Ω

Judah ben Samuel Halevi
(c. 1075–1141)
The greatest Hebrew poet of his generation in medieval Spain.



Dear Lord, bless
the food before us,
the people beside us,
the love between us,
and those beyond our reach. Ω

Emily Stevens

Wise Women

"All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful."

"People without hope not only don't write novels, but what is more to the point, they don't read them."

"I can, with one eye squinted, take it all as a blessing."

Flannery O'Connor

"While I drew, and wept along with the terrified children I was drawing, I really felt the burden I am bearing. I felt that I have no right to withdraw from the responsibility of being an advocate."

"I do not want to die... until I have faithfully made the most of my talent and cultivated the seed that was placed in me until the last small twig has grown."

"It is my duty to voice the suffering of men, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high."

Käthe Kollwitz

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

"Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage."

"My great hope is to laugh as much as I cry; to get my work done and try to love somebody and have the courage to accept the love in return."

Maya Angelou

"In societies where men are truly confident of their own worth, women are not merely tolerated but valued."

"It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it."

"If you are feeling helpless, help someone."

"The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear."

Aung San Suu Kyi

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."

"Every step of the way to heaven is heaven."

"Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring."

St. Catherine of Siena

"If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution."

"If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal."

"I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck."

Emma Goldman

"I have long since come to believe that people never mean half of what they say, and that it is best to disregard their talk and judge only their actions."

Michael Krone

"Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul."

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?"

Dorothy Day

Little Brothers

(Continued from Page 1)

He worked as assistant to Sarah Caldwell, the indomitable conductor and director of the Opera Company of Boston, and became publicity director for the Newport Romantic Music Festival. His demanding, dazzling life had him rubbing shoulders with the rich and the famous, but its allure quickly faded during a champagne gathering at the White House, when he heard an interior voice ask, What are you doing here?

Gradually Curran's circle of friends shifted from celebrities to the homeless poor. Francis' *Rule for Religious Life in Hermitages*, provided a guide for Curran's desire to live the "hidden life of Nazareth," well-grounded in contemplative prayer and fraternal sharing. "We wanted the Christian love and fraternity we practiced at home to then be brought out into the streets and shared with our lesser brothers and sisters." Catholic Worker personalism also shaped this vision. "To reach the man in the streets, you must go to the street," writes Curran, quoting CW co-founder Peter Maurin.

For more than forty years, the brothers in denim-blue have befriended those whose lives have been leveled by alcoholism and mental illness. They learned their hobbies, their family histories, their children's names. They visited them in hospitals and prisons, and buried them when they died.

Curran tells of Robert Karl Deger, "the shopping bag man," whose hobo appearance reminded Curran of Saint Benedict-Joseph Labre. A former nuclear engineer, Deger left his job with the US government because of his horror of nuclear weapons. He could sometimes be seen around Boston wearing a sandwich board that read: "The end is near," and "The peanuts are poisoned," a veiled political statement in the 1970's.

Curran also tells of Urusula Von Hippel, a German-born artist, teacher, puppeteer, and "very saintly woman" who developed a brain tumor that caused her to behave erratically. Once, after hearing the parish priest advise putting one's sins in a bag and "tossing them out with the garbage," Ursula, Curran writes, "went home and filled two plastic bags with empty cans and bottles. And, coming down the center aisle of the church, swinging the bags in almost liturgical rhythm, she let them go right into the sanctuary."

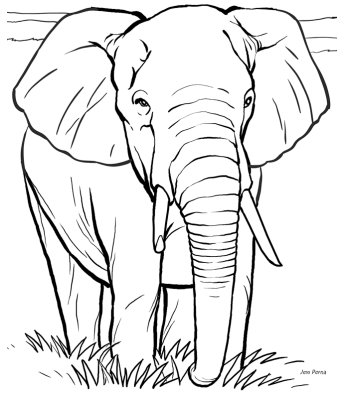
As founder of a fledgling Franciscan community, Curran was encouraged by many prominent Catholics, including Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa, who resonated with the Little Brothers' ministry of giving time to the poor for the sake of Christ. Loneliness, she often said, was America's greatest disease.

Over the years, many young men, perhaps enthralled with the rigors of the community's charism, came to observe the life, but few committed to it. We were too contemplative for some and not enough for others, says Curran who writes laconically of the difficulties in a section entitled, "Darker Moments." It includes an astonishingly frank prayer, credited to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux that begins, "My God, I do not even love you. I do not even desire it. I am weary of you...."

This modest history of the brothers in blue-denim might fail to impress some readers. We live in a stat-obsessed society where all goods must be quantified. What measureable change is achieved by a few friars sharing coffee and conversation with the hopelessly addicted? And yet, isn't the idea that some lives matter less than others part of what is wrong with the world. With their generous friendship towards the poor, the brothers are "touching the body of Jesus," as Mother Teresa put it. They are also challenging the social disorder.

One mild afternoon in August, Scott and I made the long trek from Huntington Avenue to the brothers' home in Mission Hall. The pungent odor of rotting vegetables from a corner bodega, urine, and stale beer —smells of urban poverty— greeted our nostrils as we crossed into the poorer neighborhood. Brother James, 80, is no longer there. The Parkinson's disease and diabetes that bedeviled his body for more than a dozen years necessitated his move to a nursing home. But four brothers reside in the spartan house on Parker Street. And they are still practicing the "three P's." Ω

Editor's Note: To order Curran's book, or learn more about the Little Brothers of St. Francis, please visit www.littlebrothersofstfrancis.org



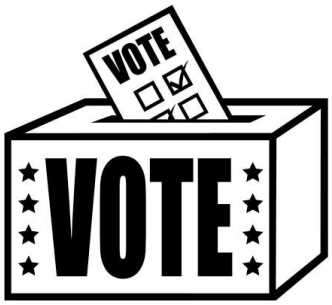
A Child's Hope

Editor's Note: Just after *September 11 attacks and the US invasion of Afghanistan, a touch of innocence and hope came in the mail in a letter from Judy Hillegas about her and her husband Dale's son, Miles. An excerpt of that letter is reprinted below.*

Miles got put in time-out at preschool the other day and explained why it happened. He told me that "They don't know this about me," referring to the preschool teachers, "but I have a teeny-tiny half of my brain and a very large half, and the tenny-tiny half didn't know that what it was doing was wrong and the large half did, but by the time the large half realized what was going on, it was too late for it to tell the teeny-tiny half to stop.

I asked him what it was that the teeny-tiny half did that landed him in time out and he informed me that the large half was asleep now and the teeny-tiny half didn't remember; so therefore he couldn't tell me. He's very matter-of-fact about the whole thing.

He's also convinced that he's going to be an elephant when he grows up. He loves them. Dale asked him if he was an elephant and Miles replied, "I'm not now, but I soon will be." Ω



Consistency

On October 30th, a local Catholic pastor told an audience that it is "a serious sin" to deliberately endorse or promote a candidate who supports any of five "intrinsically evil" issues: abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, human cloning, and gay marriage.

That same day, *The National Catholic Reporter* offered a broader view of Catholic concerns. "The list of intrinsic evils in Catholic voter guides," wrote the editors, "are actually cherry-picked from long lists of actions that are intrinsically evil by church teaching." NCR then quoted Pope John Paul II' encyclical *Veritatis Splendor,* which condemns "any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat laborers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace … and they are a negation of the honor due to the Creator."

NCR goes on to say, "We might even add climate change to the list. After all, if the right to life is the most basic human right, then human-caused global warming threatening the entire life of the planet must be the ultimate evil."

Now that the US election is over, we hope and pray that more Americans will rise above partisan politics to take prophetic stands against all social evil. Social justice and morality are never served by emphasizing some evils as a justification for electing candidates who embrace others. Ω

Mum's the Word

The most expensive presidential campaign in US history afforded the Republican and Democratic nominees unprecedented opportunity to address vital issues. Nonetheless, Governor Romney and President Obama chose to ignore the following:

Gun Control: After increasingly bloody examples of gun violence and the continued availability of assault weapons without background checks, both candidates said NOTHING.

Global Warming: After alarming reports of dire ecological and economic consequences of continued fossil fuel consumption, even after Hurricane Sandy, both candidates said NOTHING.

Minimum Wage: After the Occupy Movement exposed the widening income gap between the rich and poor and the government reported that the minimum wage is now less than half a living wage, both candidates said NOTHING.

Civil Rights: In the face of rendition, life without parole for minors, torture, assassination, and denial of *habeas corpus*, both candidates said NOTHING.

Nuclear Disarmament: Regarding the tens of thousands of genocidal nuclear weapons held by the US, Russia, Israel, France, Britain, China, and India, both candidates said NOTHING.

Prison Overcrowding: With the largest prison population in the world, a population that is increasingly being economically exploited, both candidates said NOTHING.

Israeli Human Rights Violations: After a historic fast by Palestinians imprisoned without charge and other nonviolent campaigns against Israeli house demolitiuons, and land and water seizures, both candidates said NOTHING.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain: In the face of growing evidence of gross human rights abuse in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, both candidates said NOTHING.

Tibet: After the United Nations human rights chief, Navi Pillay, decried China's "violence against Tibetans seeking to exercise their fundamental human rights of freedom of expression, association and religion," and pointed to "reports of detentions and disappearances, of excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators, and curbs on the cultural rights of Tibetans," both candidates said NOTHING.

Mexico: After more than 60,000 Mexicans have been killed in the failed US/Mexican war on drugs, both candidates said NOTHING.

Poverty: With the highest number of Americans in poverty since the Great Depression, both candidates said NOTHING.

Isn't it high time for Americans to support third party candidates or to eschew the system altogether and take grass roots action for a better society? Ω

To the Editor:
I read with great interest the thoughtful exchange about sexuality between Geri DiNardo and the editor in the October/November issue, and was deeply moved by Geri's response.

Although I understand and appreciate *The Catholic Radical's* choosing to abide, as the editor said, by "those tools which define our Catholic faith," that choice seems unfortunate for several reasons.

Most importantly, in neglecting to challenge the present policy of the Church, the Catholic Worker tolerates and endorses a policy that causes unnecessary suffering for people who are gay or lesbian.

Secondly, reliable research indicates that sexual choice may be innate. Should people be discriminated against simply because they were born a certain way?

Also, would the Catholic Worker have endorsed slavery, for example, when it was upheld by the Church in the past? Shouldn't church doctrine encourage the best values of the dominant culture, particularly if they are based upon knowledge not previously available to us, as well as consistent with the teaching of Jesus?

In conclusion, the editor suggests that the only choice for anyone who disagrees with Church teaching is to leave the Church. Isn't it possible to be a good Catholic while following one's conscience regarding sexual choice?

Historically, Church teaching has been mistaken on various issues, which were eventually altered. Isn't it possible that the teaching on sexual behavior is an instance of its being wrong once again?

I realize that answers to these questions are not obvious. But as Archbishop Spong once said, in another context, "Truth cannot be deferred because it's inconvenient."

Michael True
Worcester, Massachusetts

To the Editors,
Catholic teaching has a lot to say about the behavior and treatment of lesbians and gays. Much of this teaching is hurtful, and is experienced as harsh and unjust. How should a conscientious Catholic respond?

First let's stipulate, the Church is not the Vatican. It is the community of believers, the whole mystical body of Christ. Each has a role to play.

The Pope and Bishops' main job is to keep some sense of identity and membership-rules for a worldwide community, not an easy job.... But the community has a role as well. Catholic Tradition is embodied in the sense of the faithful down through the ages, their worship, their saints, and above all the hard experiences they have in trying to live their faith in this real world. So this role of the faithful is a most important source of faith. It keeps the other authorities honest....

Hierarchs can't teach any old thing, and rightly expect to be obeyed blindly. And even if you are an ordinary believer, you need, just like the Pope, to hang onto certain basics.

Sri Lankan Catholic theologian, Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, basing himself on the love command of Jesus, offers this guiding principle we can use to conscientiously assess authoritative theological claims: "Any element in theology that insults, degrades, dehumanizes, or discriminates against any section of humanity at any time and place cannot be from God in Jesus. By their fruits you shall know them — the fruits of hate and insult cannot come from God in Jesus." See *Mary and Human Liberation*....

Hierarchs acknowledge that homosexuals should not be discriminated against. But they continue not to acknowledge the experience of lesbians and gays, of what living life as a homosexual is all about. They continue to view that experience and those feelings as wrong and distorted, and in the process lesbians and gays are taught that their very selves as human beings are oriented toward evil in a way that heterosexuals are not. And if they act in the way that God created them, they are doing evil. This is unimaginably abusive teaching. THIS CANNOT BE FROM GOD.

Faithful Catholics who understand this, play a prophetic role when they welcome lesbians and gays exactly and fully as God created them. In this way, the sense and experience of faithful believers can bring the Church and its leaders to a fuller understanding of what it means to treat all its members with basic justice and respect for their experience and dignity, and to end this sad, abusive, and clueless behavior toward its lesbian and gay members....

Ed Stevens
Wayland, Massachusetts

Dear Scott & Claire,
What a beautiful and heart-rending article by Dorothy! And the article by Jo Massarelli on accompanying her dying brother and the whole issue of assisted suicide. And finally the letters between you and Geri DiNardo on the whole homosexual issue. All of them were very personal for me.

My older brother was recently diagnosed with ALS, expected life span of 3 to 5 years. I am very much afraid he and his physician wife, given their liberal views, will opt for assisted suicide after a certain level of impairment is reached.

As to the gay issue, in my own family it has come up, both extended and immediate. Everyone wants to be happy in love, and for the vast majority that includes a sexual component. (I have been separated from my wife for ten years now and I know that trying to live celibately, much less chastely, is no picnic!) You mentioned Mt 19:4-6: Jesus answered, **"Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."** Could you apply these words to a man and man or to a woman and woman? Could they be said to become "one flesh" in this way? The obvious intuitive answer is "no." But heterosexual union is not only in the order of nature, it is archetypal, to use Jungian language. It is part of the very *ying* and *yang* of creation, to use Taoist language. Can we really believe that when God created us male and female, he intended that some of us might be sexually united with our own sex? I don't see how. Could homosexuality have existed in an unfallen world, in paradise? Again I don't see how. But it of course begs the question, then why are roughly 1 in 20 of us oriented in that way? There is no obvious answer except that it is part of the mys-

tery of our wounded and fallen world. We all are profoundly immersed in the disordered state of our world where the good will often appear as evil (example, self denial) and the bad will appear as good (example, constant feasting). My best guess as to the "cause" of homosexuality, though admittedly abstract, is that it is part of the profound wound of enmity that exists between man and woman since the very first sin of Adam and Eve. This is not a scientific explanation, it is a theological one. And so far I have not heard one theological or philosophical proposal for homosexuality in the positive sense at all. I always hear an appeal to subjective experience: It feels good to me, doesn't harm anyone and in no way effects my ability to be Christ-like in any other way. These are actually powerful arguments. There are many gay Christians out there who are probably far more Christ-like in their behavior to others than I am. It certainly won't be my good works that save me! But I just can't get by the gut conviction that God didn't create us to have sex with our own.

Dorothy's article puts everything in final perspective. We are not saved by sex or even by marriage.... We are saved by Christ, and specifically we are saved by attaching ourselves to him on the Cross. Why? Because it is the deepest meaning of love. Only this love, which "became sin for us," can save us from our own hells of neediness, fear and enmity. God bless you both in pursuing in love this dialogue.

Paul del Junco
Toronto, Canada

Dear Scott, Claire, and C.R. Readers,
I was strongly moved by reading in your fall issue of the difficult challenges faced by Geri DiNardo and other homosexuals confronting the patriarchy of the Catholic Church.... I would not tell others what to do about this most personal quest, but I left Catholicism years ago to become a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).... In April, 2008, our Worcester Meeting adopted a "Minute on Marriage," which ...reads, in part: "We wholeheartedly support all loving and committed relationships between two mutually consenting, informed adults, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, health status, gender, or sexual orientation.

"Recognizing that there are myriad ways to honor the sanctity of loving relationships, just as there are no limits to the ways that the Light may illuminate our paths, we cherish those who enter into devoted and responsible partnerships. We strongly oppose any restrictions on the rights of same gender couples to marry.

"We welcome the full participation and membership of such couples into the warm embrace of our Meeting. And we pray that the Living Spirit will continue to guide us toward the opening of our hearts, as we strive to witness a fuller sense of unity and harmony with all of creation."

May you find some solace in your quest.

Matt Shorten
Barre, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: On this and all issues, we pray for Divine guidance to become more compassionate and less fearful of taking positions that we believe are right, but are not popular. We welcome dialogue.

Dear Scott, Claire, Family, Community Members, Friends, and Guests,
...I struggle with how much to campaign for a higher standard of living for everyone. I can see a little of that struggle for you too, Scott, in "Beating Up On the Poor" when you say even homeless people go into debt to get the latest junk. I've grown up below the poverty line my whole life. I know x number of dollars or x number of possessions or lack thereof doesn't really make anyone rich or poor. So, I ask myself, what is it? I reckon it's a sense of being trapped that can make people feel poor. I've known for the past 22 years that the voluntary bit in voluntary poverty is what makes it work. Personally, I don't like that term because I don't feel impoverished. However, 22 years ago, I was travelling with a woman who saw our joy at living simply and wanted it too. She never found it. She hated the sleeping rough, the bathing in public toilets, the hand-washing clothes, also in public toilets, not being able to buy the foods she wanted, the dumpster diving, making do with cast-off clothing, etc. In the end she told us we'd lied to her. Of course, for us it wasn't a lie, but for her, without a real understanding, appreciation, and delight in living simply all she saw was the deprivation.

Then, on the other side of the coin, Jesus said to give to the poor. He did have Peter, James, and John leave their means of income (fishing) and with Levi (tax-collecting) to join with him in his homeless gypsy lifestyle — so earning money to be able to give more money to charity wasn't really his game. However, "giving to the poor" is repeated often. So there's obviously an element of trying to better the lives of others who feel trapped by poverty, at the same time there's a message of "hey, life's pretty cool when you're happy with less."...

Sheri Ellery
Whirinaki, New Zealand

Catholic Worker Calendar

December 10, January 9 & 23 — Mass or Evening Prayer: Please join us in prayer and song on Mason Street at 7:30 P.M. Refreshments to follow.

December23 — Christmas Caroling: Please join us at 52 Mason Street for our annual caroling at a nursing home and in our neighborhood. Gather at 5:30 P.M.. Mulled cider and Christmas cookies will be served afterwards.

January 18 — *A Force More Powerful*: Please come see this marvelous documentary about nonviolent campaigns in Chile, Poland, and Denmark. 52 Mason Street. 7 P.M. Refreshments to follow

For more information, call: 508 753-3588

Mason Street Musings

Like my father, I am a ridiculously early riser. While I was a college student, he knocked on my dorm room door before sunrise on a Sunday morning asking, "Were you still sleeping?" In the wee hours, I do house laundry and grocery shopping (thank God for 24-hour stores), letter writing, and exercises. I get a good jump on the day, but the downside is I am a *putz* in the evening. By 7 P.M. I just want to read a novel or watch an episode of *Poirot* or *Monk*.

My wife and co-worker, Claire, is on a more normal schedule. Last night, she suggested that our son Aiden and I watch a documentary called *A Force More Powerful*. An ideological video would not be fun, I griped, but Claire has a certain don't-dispute-my-word look sometimes, so I begrudgingly sat down with my arms folded, fully prepared to dislike the video.

To my surprise and Claire's satisfaction (she usually wins), I not only enjoyed the film, but also was deeply moved. We saw one section of a three-part film looking at various nonviolent campaigns. The ferocity of the Chilean dictator, General Augosto Pinochet, was not sugar coated, nor was the nonviolent campaign romanticized. The film was gripping.

At one point, Father Cristian Precht, a spokesperson for the Catholic Archbishop of Santiago says, "...we think violence is the strength of the weak because they don't have arguments, they don't have moral authority. Whatever you achieve through violence you have to defend through violence."

I could not help but think of the civil war in Syria. Human beings are constantly duped into trusting that the most efficient way to overthrow oppressors is through violence. President Assad, like Pinochet and others before him, use the violence of regime opponents as a justification for indiscriminate retaliation against civilians. Nonviolence is a much tougher nut to crack. It also lays a secure foundation for a new regime free from reprisal killings and prolonged bitterness.

Fritz Eichenberg

Thanks to a gift card from her sister, Claire and I went to the movies to see *Argo*. The previews advertised a remake of the Reagan era anti-communist movie *Red Dawn* and a new film about vigilante cops fighting gangsters in Los Angeles. In capital letters, both previews screamed VIOLENCE IS NECESSARY TO DEFEAT EVIL. Nonviolence and even traditional police work were derided as ineffectual, if not cowardly.

My experience in Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and Darfur is the exact opposite. Unlike Hollywood's fantasies, real violence makes matters unspeakably worse.

During Advent and the Christmas seasons, the Church reminds us of the human yearning for peace, as well as God's joyful promise that it will come in completeness. The message is extraordinarily countercultural and extremely pertinent. Our hearts are tugged by the conversions of the Grinch and Scrooge because deep down in our souls we know that nothing is more powerful than love.

On behalf of our guests and all the people we try to protect from the scourge of war, we thank you for your love. A woman called last week asking me what we needed at our house. I gave her a long list of staples we use, as well as items we'd like to have. I figured she might drop off an item or two from my list, but she gave us many things, including a new toaster. I thought of Christ's promise, "**It will be given to you, good measure and overflowing into your lap**" (Luke 6).

Especially, during these hard times, God bless all of you for your generosity. May each of us draw strength from the birth of the Prince of Peace. Ω **Scott**

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